

Are you scared of ghosts? Well, you need not be viewing this film which is one the whole family can enjoy during the festive season, reports Lisa Dewson

IN an age where sex, violence and four-letter expletives are rife in movies, those films which are devoid of such elements are not only rare, but positively embraced by the majority of filmgoers.

Proof of this can be seen in the list of films which have become the top grossers of all time — such as *ET*, *Star Wars*, *Raiders Of The Lost Ark*, and *Return Of The Jedi*. Now there's a new contender for the title of cinema's biggest ever money-maker: *Ghostbusters*. In America alone it has grossed a phenomenal 200 million dollars.

The film stars Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis as the title characters, a trio of slightly off-beat parapsychologists who start up their own business — clearing out ghosts from the city of New York.

The idea for the movie originated with Dan Aykroyd. After drafting out an initial script, he brought in Harold Ramis and together they wrote the screenplay upon which the film is based. Referring to such stars as Laurel and Hardy, Abbott

(continued overleaf)

This page and overleaf: *Ghostbusters*, in which Sigourney Weaver (below being abducted by a mysterious creature) co-stars with Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis



SPOOKS LOOK OUT



and Costello, Dean Martin and Jerry Lewis, Aykroyd describes *Ghostbusters* as just another addition to the numerous movies which have portrayed ghosts in comedy.

"Nearly every major comedy performer has dealt with ghosts in some of his work," says the actor. "We've simply done a modern version of popular, old-time ghost movies — a mixture of laughter and spookiness. The only difference is that we include a little bit more theory (Aykroyd is a member of the American Society for Psychical Research), perhaps a spot more science and for sure a lot more technology than our predecessors."

Although Aykroyd and Bill Murray are regular co-stars on American TV's *Saturday Night Live*, *Ghostbusters* is their first movie together. Director Ivan Reitman had worked with both of them prior to making the film, as well as Harold Ramis on *Meatballs* and *Stripes* (which, incidentally, starred Murray).

"We all approached *Ghostbusters*



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from the point of view of a team," said Ramis about his co-stars. "My character, Spengler, is the brains if only because I tend to be rationalistic. Dan's character, Stantz, is the heart — because he's enthusiastic and sincere. Bill's character, Venkman, is the mouth, because Bill really can talk. Somehow, together, we add up to a whole person!"

In the film, the Ghostbusters' most urgent call comes from the distressed owner (played by Sigourney Weaver) of an apartment on the top floor of a huge skyscraper. Up until now the actress has featured mostly in dramas, but she welcomed the opportunity of appearing alongside three such renowned comic talents.

"I looked forward to doing the comedy with Bill, Harold and Dan — not least because I suspected the work would be loose, crazy and often spontaneous. And it was! I've done improvisation on the stage, but never before so much, and so often in front of the camera. One thing that made it a totally different atmosphere was that the guys were so generous, there was no ego anywhere, it was all very giving."

A highlight of the film is its dazzling display of special effects, both visual and mechanical — the latter being the "Terror Dogs", stone manifestations which 'come alive'.

During production the technical crew were presented with some unusual design problems. These ranged from a temple on top of a skyscraper (the film's main set

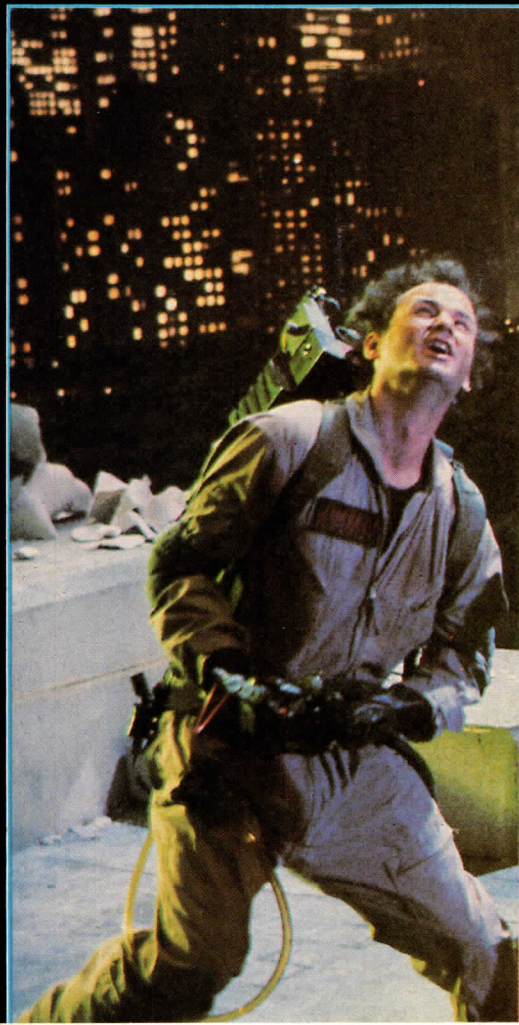
and one which alone cost over a million dollars), to the array of complicated but authentic-looking paraphernalia any self-respecting ghostbuster would carry. But, as director Reitman points out, a lot of the groundwork for the designs was done by Aykroyd.

"Part of the package Dan delivered to me with that first script draft, was a series of illustrations showing some of the equipment he felt the ghostbusters should tote around to apprehend various ghostly beings — what some of the spooks would look like and how they would travel.

"We've simply done a modern version of popular, old-time ghost movies," says Dan Aykroyd

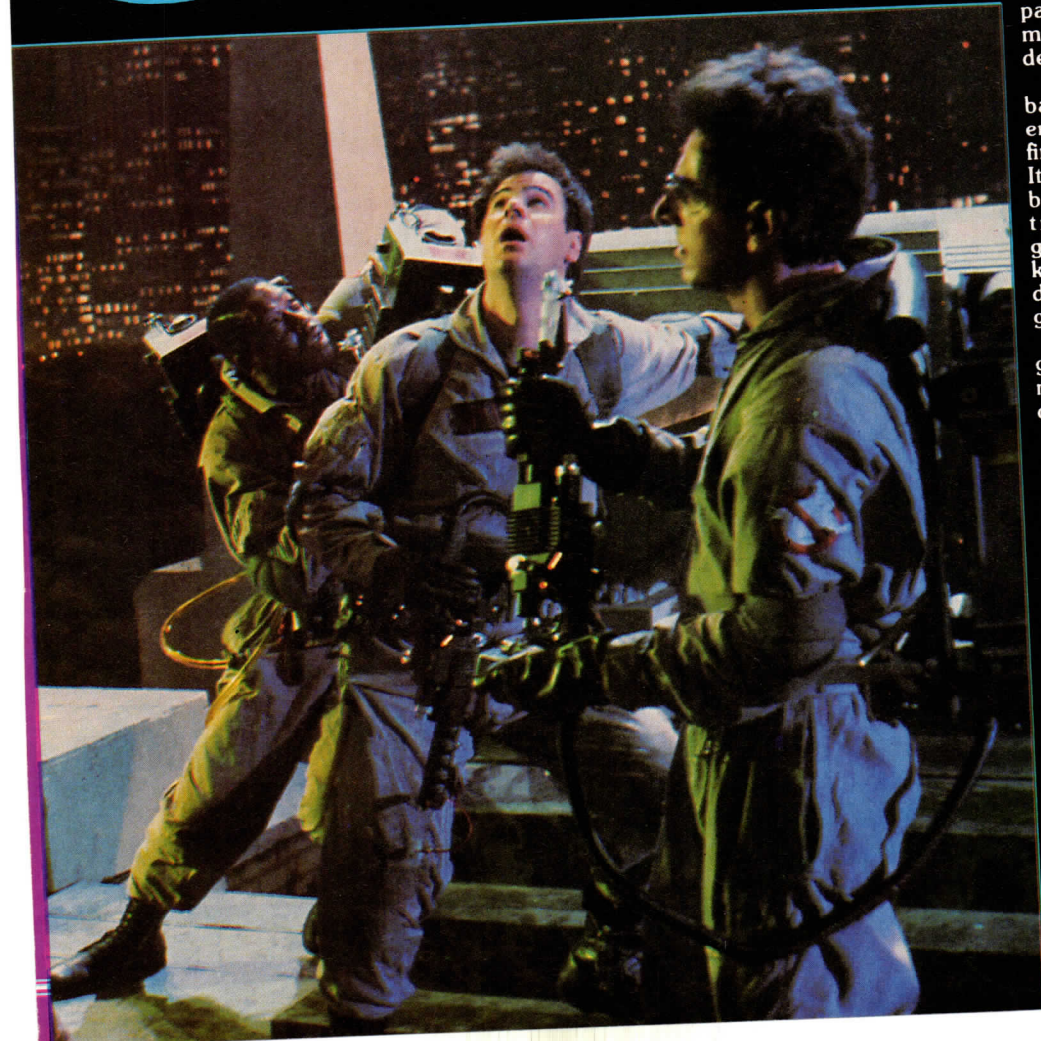
"Although these elements evolved a great deal during production, the original ideas came from Dan. And there is certainly none of that *Star Trek* gloss to the equipment. It may look crude and tacky, but it looks like it's going to work!"

Harold Ramis elaborated further: "Dan persuaded a friend to make our proton backpacks. The first one was made of polystyrene and old radio parts. Dan then bought a jumpsuit, put all the stuff on in his house and videotaped himself catching a ghost. When we turned the whole





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package over to the special effects department, I think everyone was surprised. The designs really are amazing.

"We wear highly sophisticated backpacks and carry neutrons wands that emit particle streams. We also drive the first functional Ectomobile in the world! It's a very elegant 1959 Cadillac ambulance outfitted with a variety of electronic devices which allow the ghostbusters to locate any major psychokinetic disturbance... Dan really loved driving it around New York with the sirens going!"

So this Christmas, as the title song goes: "If there's a ghost in your neighbourhood, who you gonna call... Ghostbusters!"



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THE SIGOURNEY WEAVER DOSSIER

Betty Jennings follows the fast-rising career of an actress who prefers off-beat roles, including the one in her latest box-office success—*Ghostbusters*